

My Republican friends on the other side of the aisle, especially their leadership, have raised millions of dollars from the drug industry. As a result, the drug industry and the insurance industry wrote the Medicare bill. That is why the Medicare bill simply will not work the way that it should, that is why drug profits continued to go up, that is why seniors continue to pay two and three and four times what they do in Canada.

We have got to break the leash and the connection between the drug industry and the Republican Party and President Bush.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. BURTON) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. BURTON addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

EXPLAINING THE OIL FOR FOOD SCANDAL

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Wisconsin (Mr. GREEN) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. GREEN of Wisconsin. Mr. Speaker, Americans are just beginning to read and hear of something called the Oil for Food scandal. Well, what does that mean? What does that term mean? And, more importantly, why should Americans care?

Well, Mr. Speaker, for just a few minutes, I would like to try to answer those questions.

Over a dozen years ago, Mr. Speaker, right after Saddam Hussein invaded Kuwait, the world moved quickly to impose sweeping international sanctions on Iraq. Those sanctions were designed to force Saddam Hussein to leave Kuwait and to follow international law on matters ranging from human rights to supporting terrorism to ending any pursuit of weapons of mass destruction.

Because our beef was with Saddam Hussein and his evil regime and not with the Iraqi people, the Oil for Food program was created. It was established as a humanitarian way through the United Nations to try to offer some relief to the Iraqi people. It was intended to allow the Iraqi Government to sell limited quantities of oil, so long as the proceeds were used to purchase food, medicine, and other essentials for the Iraqi people.

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As I said, it was a humanitarian, compassionate gesture.

Now there is a scandal. There is a scandal, Mr. Speaker, because of growing evidence of the Oil For Food program was not only mismanaged, but used by Saddam Hussein for diabolical purposes. Some say the program is twisted by mismanagement. Some say it was twisted by corruption and greed.

Still others say that it was twisted by an anti-American agenda and bias.

So what happened that is so scandalous? Well, for one thing, Saddam Hussein used money, lots and lots of money, to buy things other than necessities for the Iraqi people. Not just small things like alcohol and cigarettes, but he used over \$2 billion to build palaces, monuments to himself and his evil regime. Even worse, he used some of that money to build his weapons and to launch his weapons program. This was money that would have gone to his people. Instead, this money went to perpetuate his evil regime and his lifestyle.

Secondly, because of alleged mismanagement and corruption within this U.N. program, billions of dollars that were procured are now missing. This was money that should be in the hands of the Iraqi people. Now more than ever, at the very time they need money for reconstruction, money to get back on their feet, money to build new schools, money to get ahead and build a brighter future, that money, \$10 billion worth, that money is gone.

Finally, and worst of all, some of this Oil For Food money was used by Saddam Hussein to pay off his cronies, allegedly to buy influence around the world, perhaps even in the United Nations itself, and to thwart the economic sanctions and diplomacy that we all hoped and prayed would avoid war. Lord forbid that this last point is true, because if it is true, if in fact some of this money was used to buy influence in the United Nations and other countries, it means that some of this money, it means that the Oil For Food program, it means that individuals within the United Nations and the international community, that their actions thwarted diplomacy and prevented sanctions from happening. And because diplomacy and sanctions failed, we went to war. And that means, Mr. Speaker, something that we all dearly hope is not true; that means that this corruption of this program led to the loss of American lives.

Mr. Speaker, this scandal involves billions of dollars, it involves mismanagement, it involves corruption, it involves illegal activity, and it may involve the kind of activity that costs lives, has lengthened this conflict, and perhaps even led to war.

Mr. Speaker, in the coming weeks, I and a number of other members of committees like the Committee on International Relations will come to this floor to ask publicly some important questions of the United Nations to try to get some answers, to learn more about the Oil For Food program, to find out whether there was, in fact, the corruption that we fear, and to try to get some answers. The American people deserve answers. The families of servicemen deserve answers. All of us deserve answers.

As I have said, I dearly hope that what we have read and what we have heard is not true, because if it is, as

William Safire of the New York Times has said, it would make it the most far-reaching political and financial scandal in history.

FOREST SERVICE UNDERFUNDED TO FIGHT FOREST FIRES IN 2004

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. CHOCOLA). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. DEFAZIO) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. DEFAZIO. Mr. Speaker, today, the Committee on Resources held a hearing on the coming fire season in the West. Officials of the Bush administration predicted that arguably, this could be the worst fire season in the Nation's history. So far, so good. They are looking out for our resources, our communities, our people.

Unfortunately, they went on to say that because the President shorted the budget and the Congress agreed with the President, that there is only about half the money in that budget that they expect they are going to need to fight the fires this year. Last year, a pretty bad fire season, but not the worst in history, the Forest Service ran out of money in August. Now, they cannot stop fighting the fires, so what do they do? Well, they go out and rob other Forest Service programs that are already underfunded. Over the last few years, they have gone and canceled fuel reduction contracts; that is, preventing the intensity or the possibility or probability of future fires through thinning and other activities, they actually would rob that program to pay for fighting this year's fires. But they do not learn their lesson.

Over the last 5 years, the average spent to fight fires by the Federal agencies has been \$1.2 billion. So what did the President ask for and the Republican Congress give him in this year's budget? Mr. Speaker, \$600 million, one-half of that amount. We are going into the worst fire year in history with less than one-half of the 5-year average. Even worse, just a few days ago, the Bush administration grounded all the tanker planes, because they cannot coordinate between the FAA and the BLM and the Forest Service and they cannot work out some paperwork on certifying whether or not these planes are safe or not. So our first line of defense, the heaviest line of defense we have, that which I know has saved the lives of firefighters and has saved homes and communities, is grounded.

Fourteen months ago I anticipated this problem and wrote to the Forest Service and they said, oh, do not worry, we have a plan. Their plan is a whole bunch of small planes and helicopters and yes, they can perform a valuable function, but they cannot get very quickly to distant fires, they cannot drop the huge loads that are sometimes needed to save a fire crew or stop a fire from breaching a hill and going down into a community or engulfing a